

<http://amt.parsons.edu/2011/09/21/announcing-the-zoetrope-finally>

Announcing the Zoetrope! (finally....!)

Can you say “lenticular zoetrope” three times fast? Lentic- lencul – zoetric... Hm.



The Zoetrope installation in Union Square

The Zoetrope project began in a Collaborative Studio course last semester, taught by Anezka Sebek and created by Josh Spodek. It was intended to help students learn how analog animation works. But it turned out to be more time-consuming and complicated than they had imagined.

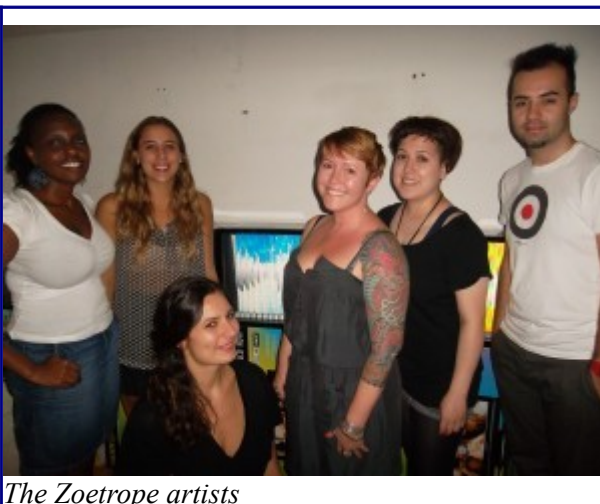
And by the end of August, close to the date when the Zoetrope was set to be installed in a Union Square subway station, technical difficulties and a time crunch had the students worried.

The Zoetrope has finally been installed in the station just below the Food Emporium on 14th Street.

But a few weeks ago, the group of AMT students and alumni who were working on constructing a Zoetrope met in the apartment of Josh Spodek, who developed the software for the project. The Zoetrope was positioned against one wall.

“I got into it because it was an experimental way of animating. And it’s nothing like what I thought,” said Josefina Santos about the project.

“It helps us understand the illusion of motion versus *actual* motion,”



The Zoetrope artists

remarked Jaqi Vigil.

Jeanne Kelly explained the process. “First we made image boards, compress slides of movement,” she said. “Then each person used his own technique to design the slides. I used Photoshop. Others used Illustrator or Aftereffects.”

“The technology is the most exciting part,” said Hilal Koyuncu.

“And there’s an element of surprise to it,” added Jaqi.

Jeanne agreed. “The idea that the slides will be rotated often reflects our culture, since everything is always changing. It really fits in Union Square, where the crowd is always moving through.”

Rose Maison recalled a prototype they had done in the Parsons building at 2 W 13th Street, where people had stopped to look and bobbed their heads, mesmerized by the animations.



Animation slides

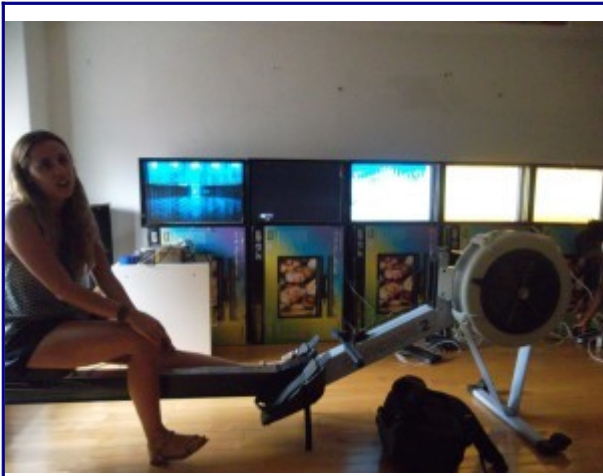
“We hope that will happen in Union Square,” said Rose. “It’s kind of a social experiment, getting people to slow down and look at art.”

“No one has time to have a complete story told to them,” added Umut Ozover, saying he hoped that the Zoetrope would give passers-by something fun to look at while they commuted.

Jeanne elaborated on some of the challenges involved with the Zoetrope construction. “We’ve been focusing on technique before content, and we have to look at each slide specifically, whether it’s a simple line animation or a more complex figure,” she explained. “The real challenge is in the limitations of frames, and we see that because of the difference in time spans of animations,” she added.

The designers have learned through trial-and-error, tackling each challenge as it has surfaced. The energy in the room was palpable as the artists discussed how they had worked through each technical obstacle.

“When it works out, it’s so amazing,” gushed Josefina.



Josefina Santos and the pre-installation Zoetrope

And they were looking forward to being able to focus on making cool animations once the technical details were figured out. “We’ll be able to express our own styles once we get over the restrictions we’re dealing with,” said Jaqil.

Now that the installation is set up, the Zoetrope team is excited to see how it is received by the public.

But they still have to do some fine-tuning, said Josh Spodek. “Certain things you can plan but there are always little things to fix,” he explained.

“Yesterday we were putting some new software in the computer. It’s funny because if this were a gallery you’d be doing this behind closed doors, but since it’s in public people come up and talk to us and we mostly like it,” Josh said.

Josh obtained permission from the MTA to have the Zoetrope installed as part of their citywide [Arts for Transit](#) program. It is an opportunity for AMT to make its presence known throughout New York City, and hopefully help some urbanites slow down their daily hustle as well.

Check out Josh’s [website](#) to see a sequence of images from the Zoetrope installation.

Written by [Rachel Signer](#)